The Book of Esther

an English version by Len Fellman to be sung to the trope melodies (including special melodies for some "exceptional" verses inspired by midrash)
from Joshua R. Jacobson's CHANTING THE HEBREW BIBLE (1st ed. 2002)
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1:1 [Now it came to pass] in the days of Ahasuerus—
this is the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia—[which included] a hundred twenty-seven provinces:
2 It happened, in those days, [when there sat] | the king, Ahasuerus, on the royal throne which was in Shushan the capital,
3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast [for his officials] and servants,
[chiefs of the army] | of Persia and Media, [all of the noblemen], princes of the provinces—[they stood before him];
4 [where he displayed] the riches of his glorious kingdom,
[and all the pomp] and splendor of his majesty, for many days, a hundred eighty days in all.
5 [When it was all over] | —the days of that occasion—then made [the king another feast] [for all of the people]
[who were living] in Shushan the fortified city, [from the greatest] [to the lowest habitant], [he made a banquet]—for seven days,
[right in the courtyard] of the garden of the palace of the king.
6 [There were curtains] of white and violet, attached with cords [of fine linen] and purple wool to rods of silver and columns of marble;
[and there were couches] | of gold and silver [resting upon] an alabaster pavement, set with pearl and precious stones.
7 For drinking there were golden cups, <u>each cup of a different design*</u>. And wine, [and it was royal wine], was in abundance, as befits a king.
8 The drinking, by royal command, was unrestricted, *Lamentations melody for cup plundered from the temple
[for in this manner] | were instructed [by the king] all the stewards of his house [that they observe] the wishes of each man.
9 [In addition], Vashti the queen, hosted a banquet for the women, in [the royal palace], the house of King Ahasuerus.
10 On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, [he commanded his servants] Mehuman, Bizzetha and Harbona,
Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas, the seven royal eunuchs—the ones who served—in the presence of King Ahasuerus
11 [that they should bring] Vashti [she who was the queen] before the king, wearing her royal crown,
to display her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was lovely to behold.
12 But she refused—Queen Vashti—to come at the command of the king, that was delivered by the eunuchs,
and the king was enraged greatly, and his anger burned inside him.

1:13 Then spoke the king [to the wise men] who understood the times—
for thus was the manner of the king [towards those] who are versed in law and justice—
14 [Those who were closest] [to him]: Carshena and Shethar, Admatha and Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan,
[these seven men], [who were the princes] | of Persia and Media, had access to the royal presence, having the leading positions in the kingdom.
15 By the law, [what should be done] to the queen, Vashti,
[forasmuch as] | she [did not obey] the command [of the king—me], Ahasuerus—that was delivered by the eunuchs?
16 Then said Memucan before the king and the princes: "Not [against the king] alone has Vashti done wrong,
[but against] [all the princes] and against [all the people]—[all those who reside] in all the lands of King Ahasuerus.
17 For [the word of the queen] [will go out to all the women] making their husbands contemptible in their eyes,
[when they will say]: 'King Ahasuerus [issued the command] to bring Vashti [she who was the queen] before him, [and she would not come].'
18 This very day [they will talk] | —the ladies [of Persia and Media]
who have heard of the words of the queen—to all the officials of the king, giving rise to contempt and rage.
1:19 If it please the king, let an edict go out from him, [and let it be recorded] into the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be changed,
that never again may Vashti appear before King Ahashuerus, and let the king confer her royal estate on one more worthy than she.
20 [Then will be heard] the decree of the king which he will make [throughout his kingdom] —as vast as it is:
[then all of the women] will show respect to their husbands, from the greatest to the least.
21 This plan was pleasing in the eyes of the king and his ministers, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.
22 He sent letters to all the provinces of the king, to each country in its own script, and to each nation in its own language,
that each man should be the master in his own house, and speak the tongue of his own people*. *Special melody
2:1 [Some time] after this, it subsided—the anger of King Ahasuerus,
and he thought of Vashti and what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.
2 Then said the king's servants, who attended him, "[Let us find]—[let us seek out for the king] some young maidens, pleasing to look at.
3 And let the king appoint [a team of officials] in each province of your kingdom, to assemble [all the fair young maidens]
that are beautiful to look at, in Shushan the citadel, at the house of the women, the house [that is in the charge of Hegai], the king's eunuch,
guardian of the women. [And let them be given] cosmetics.

2:4 And that maiden—the one who looks good in the eyes of the king—let her reign in Vashti's place.
And these words [really pleased] the king, and he acted upon them*. *Special melody
5* There was a Jew who lived in Shushan the capital, and his name was Mordecai, *Chanted by congregation \before the reader
son of Jair, [son of Shimei], son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin,
6* Kish had been exiled from Jerusalem [along with the captives] [which were carried off] *Lamentations melody
[together with] Jeconiah, King of Judah, They were sent into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.
2:7 Mordecai had raised Hadassah, known as Esther —[his uncle's daughter]—[because of the fact] that she had no father or mother.
The girl had a nice figure and a beautiful face, and with the death of her mother and father, Mordecai [had adopted her] as [his own daughter].
8 [And it happened], when they heard [the word of the king] and his decree, [when they brought] | [some girls] [in great numbers]
to Shushan the citadel under the charge of Hegai, [they took] Esther to the palace of the king, into the care of Hegai, guardian of the women.
9 [The king found her pleasing]—the maiden—[in his eyes]; she won favor [before him]. [He made haste to prepare for her]
cosmetics and rations, to give [to her], and he had seven maids chosen to attend her, from the house of the king,
[and he transferred her] [together with the maids] [to the best place] in the harem.
10 Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred [because of the fact] [that Mordecai] instructed her not to tell.
11 Day after day Mordecai would walk in front of the court of the women's quarters
to find out about Esther's welfare, [and what was happening] to her.
12 [When her turn arrived]—[the turn] for one of the girls [to go] | to King Ahasuerus, [at the end] of her prescribed days
as was the law for women: twelve months, [because this was the time] that it took to beautify them:
six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and with women's cosmetics.
13 [When thus prepared], the maiden would go to the king
and whatever she would ask for would be given [to her] to take [with her] from the women's quarters to the house of the king.
14 In the evening | she [would go there], [and in the morning] she returned to a second house for women,
[in the charge] [of Shaashgaz], the king's eunuch, guardian of the concubines.
[She would not go] again to the king unless the king [should desire her], [and he summoned her] by name.

2:15 [When it came to be the turn] of Esther, [daughter of Abihail], who was [the uncle of Mordecai]*, *Special melody
[*that* Mordecai] who had adopted her as a daughter to go [to the king], she asked for nothing [except for that] which had [already been advised]
by Hegai the king's eunuch, guardian of the women, and indeed Esther [did find] favor in the eyes [of all who saw her].
16 And Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, to his royal palace,
in the tenth month, which is the month of Tevet, [in the seventh year] of his reign.
17*And the king loved Esther [more than all the women]. [She won more favor] [as well as more kindness] from before him,
[than all the other girls]. So he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen in place of Vashti. *Special melody
18 The king then gave a huge banquet for all the officials and servants, called "The Feast of Esther".
He proclaimed a holiday for all the provinces, and distributed gifts as befits a king.
19 Then the maidens were gathered [a second time], and Mordecai sat at the king's gate,
20 Still Esther [did not reveal] who were her kindred or her people, [just as it had been] instructed to her by Mordecai,
for the bidding of Mordecai she obeyed, [just as it had been] when she was brought up by him.
21 In that time, when Mordecai was sitting [at the palace gate], [two became enraged]: Bigthan and Teresh,
two eunuchs of the king who guarded the threshhold, and they sought to lay hands [on King] Ahashuerus.
22 The matter became known to Mordecai ,[and he told it] to Esther the queen,
and Esther [passed the story on] to the king in the name of Mordecai.
23 They looked into the matter, [and found it to be so], and the two were impaled on stakes. *Special melody
[This was recorded] [in a book]—the royal annals, log, and Chronicles—in the presence of the king*.

3:1 [It was some time] | after [all of these events], King Ahasuerus promoted Haman [son of Hammedatha] the Agagite and advanced him,
and set his seat [over and above] [all of the the princes] who were with him.
2 All the king's servants at [the palace gate] [knelt down] and bowed low to Haman,
for thus had commanded the king. [But Mordecai] would not kneel, and would not bow down.
3 Then there spoke the courtiers—[servants of the king] who were at the palace gate to Mordecai,
"Why do you transgress the command of the king?"

3:4 [And it happened] [when they spoke] [to him] day after day, and he would not listen to them.
[that they told it] to Haman to see if the words of Mordecai would prevail, for he had told them that he was a Jew.
5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down and prostrate himself to him, then Haman was filled with rage.
6 But [he disdained] to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of Mordecai's people.
[Instead sought] Haman [to destroy] [all of the Jews] [who lived throughout] the kingdom of Ahasuerus, the kin of Mordecai.
7 [In the first] month, which is the month of Nissan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus,
they cast the *pur* —this was the lot— in the presence of Haman [to determine the day] | [casting day to day], [beginning the first month],
till it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.
8 And Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is [a certain people], scattered and dispersed
among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. [The laws that they observe] are different [from those of other people],
and the laws of the king they do not observe. To the king it is not befitting to tolerate them.
9 If it pleases the king, let there be a decree [to destroy them], and ten thousand [talents of silver]
I will pay into the hands of those who do the deed, to bring it into the treasuries of the king.
10 [And so the king] [proceeded to remove] [his signet ring] from his hand,
[and handed it over] [to Haman] [son of Hammedatha] the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.
11 Then said the king to Haman, "The silver is given to you, [and also the people], to do with them what seems good in your eyes."
12 [Then were summoned] the scribes of the king in [the first month], on the thirteenth day [of the month]. [And the orders were written],
[according to all that was commanded] by Haman, to the regents —[the satraps of the king], [to the governers]
who | preside [over all] the provinces [in their own script], [and to the] officials [of every people]; all the nations in their own language,
in the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed by the signet ring of the king.
13 Letters were dispatched by [the hand of runners] to all the provinces of the king, [saying to destroy],
to massacre, to exterminate, [all of the Jews] from young to old, including children and women, on a single day
[on the] [thirteenth day] of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.
14 Copies [of this written document] [were to be proclaimed] as law in every province, and displayed to all the peoples,
for them to be ready [for that day].

3:15 The couriers [went out] posthaste by order of the king, and the decree was proclaimed *Special melody
in Shushan the capital. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was bewildered*.

4:1* And Mordecai [came to know] all that had happened. Then tore Mordecai his garments, *Special melody
and put on sackcloth and ashes. He went out into the midst of the city. [and there he cried], wailing loud and bitterly.
2 [And he came] [as far as] the front of the palace gate, for [no one was] [allowed to walk in through] the king's gate dressed in sackcloth.
3 And in province after province, any place where [the king's word] and his decree did reach,
[there was great] mourning [among the Jews]; fasting and weeping and wailing. Sackcloth and ashes [were laid out] for the masses*. *Special melody
4 [When there came] the maidens of Esther and her eunuchs who told her [about it], the queen was distressed exceedingly.
She sent some garments [with which] [to dress Mordecai], [and to take] [his sackcloth away] [from him]. But he would not accept them.
5 [Then Esther] summoned Hathach, [one of the king's] eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, [and he sent him] to Mordecai,
to learn what this was about and what it means.
6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square, [in front of] the palace gate.
7 Then Mordecai [told him] what had happened to him, [and also about] the portion—[the exact amount of money]
which was offered by Haman [to deposit into] the royal [treasuries of the king], for the Jews—[to destroy them].
8 And a copy [of the written decree] which was proclaimed in Shushan for their destruction he gave [to him] to show to Esther,
so she would know. And to demand [of her] that she go [to the king] [and appeal to him] and to plead before him [for her people].
9 Then came Hathach and told Esther what it was that Mordecai had said.
10 And spoke Esther to Hathach, [and gave him a command] for Mordechai.
11 All the servants [of the king] [and the people] of the provinces of the king: [these all know] that for any man [or for any woman]
who goes [to the king] in the inner court who [has not been called] [there is one] decree: [to be put to death].
[With the exception of] the one to whom [is extended by the king] the golden scepter—[*that one* may live].
But I [have not been] summoned to go to the king [for these last] thirty days.
12 So they told Mordecai these words of Esther.

4:13 Then said Mordecai, responding to Esther,
"Do not imagine [in your heart] that you will escape by being in the king's palace, [you alone of the Jews].
14 For [if you persist] [in remaining silent] at this time, relief [and deliverance]
[will arise] for the Jews from another place, and you and the house of your father will perish,
and who knows—perhaps [for a time like this] you have come to the throne.*" *Special melody
15 Then said Esther, responding to Mordecai,
16 "[Go right now] and gather all the Jews [who can be found] [in Shushan], and fast [on my behalf].
Do not eat or drink for three full days, night or day. Also I and my maids will fast as well.
[After that] I will go to the king, which is against the law, and if I am to perish, I will perish*. *Special melody
17 Then left Mordecai, [and carried out] [all of the things] that were commanded to him by Esther*. *End of chapter melody

5:1 [And so it was], on the third [day of the fast], that Esther put on her royal robes,
[and she stood] in the court [of the king's palace], [the inner court], facing the house of the king,
[and the king at this time] [was sitting] on his royal throne in the royal palace, facing the entrance of the palace.
2 And it happened when the king had seen Esther the Queen standing in the courtyard that she found favor in his eyes.
The king extended [to Esther] the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther came near and touched the tip of the scepter.
3 He then spoke to her—[the king asked], "What is with you, Esther the Queen?
[What is your request?] Even half the kingdom—it will be given to you."
4 Esther replied, if it please the king, do come—the king and Haman—today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.
5 And the king said, bring Haman quickly, to fulfill the word of Esther.
[And they came]—the king and Haman—to the banquet prepared by Esther .
6 The king said to Esther at the banquet of wine, "[What is your wish]? It shall be be granted to you.
[What is your request]? Even half the kingdom, [it shall be fulfilled]".
7 Then Esther answered saying, "My request; [my wish—is this]*: *Special melody

5:8 If I have found favor in the eyes of the king; if to the king it seems good to grant my wish, to fulfill my request:
do come—the king and Haman, to the feast that I prepared for them, and tomorrow I will fulfill the word of the king."
9 So Haman went out on that day happy and glad of heart. [But then he looked]: Haman saw Mordecai at the gate [of the palace] .
[He did not rise] or tremble [before him], [and it filled] Haman [against Mordecai] with rage.
10 But Haman [controlled himself] and went to his house. [He sent out] and called for his friends, and for Zeresh his wife.
11 They were told [by Haman] of the the greatness of his wealth, [and of his] many sons,
[and all about] how the king [advanced him], and how he raised him up [above the officials] and servants of the king.
12 [And said] Haman: "What is more, [she invited no one]—Esther the queen—[along with the king]
to the feast she prepared, [except for me]. [Tomorrow also] I am invited by her, [along with the king].
13 [Yet all this] [has not any] value to me [all of the time] in which I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the palace gate."
14 Then spoke [to him] Zeresh his wife [and all of his friends], "[Have a stake be put up] of height fifty cubits,
[and in the morning] | speak [to the king] [to have them impale] Mordecai upon it. [Then go]—[you go with the king]
to the banquet, and be merry." [It seemed good]—[this suggested plan] that was put before Haman, so he put up the gallows*. *Special melody

6:1 On that very night, sleep deserted the king,
[and he asked his servants] [to have brought to him] the book of records—the royal chronicles, that they be read before the king*. *Special melody
2 They found written this: that Mordecai had spoken out against Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, guardians of the threshhold,
who had sought to lay a hand on King Ahashuerus.
3 And the king said, "[What was done]—what honor or advancement—to Mordecai for this?"
Then replied the servants of the king who attended him, "They haven't done for him a thing."
4 The king then asked, "Who is in the courtyard?" For [Haman had entered] the court [of the king's palace]—the outermost court—
to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had prepared for him.
5 And they replied—the servants of the king—[to him], "That is Haman standing in the courtyard." And the king said, "Let him enter".

6:6 [And so did enter] Haman. The king said to him, "[What should be done] [for a man] whom the king desires to honor?"
And Haman thought in his heart, "[Whom indeed] [would he desire]—[whom would delight the king] to give honor more than to me?"
7 So Haman said to the king, "[For the man] whom the king desires to honor,
8 [Let them bring] a royal robe which has been worn by the king,
[and a horse] which has been ridden by the king, on which [there has been put] a royal crown on its head,
9 Have delivered the robe [and the horse] [into the hand of a man] who is a prince of the king, a nobleman, who will dress the man
whom the king delights to honor. He should lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him,
"This is what is done to the man whom the king wants to honor!"
10 But the king said to Haman, "[Act quickly, then].
Take now the attire and the horse, as you have said, and do this to Mordecai the Jew who is sitting at the palace gate.
Leave [nothing out] of all that you have proposed.*" *Special melody
11 So Haman took the robe and the horse [and dressed up] Mordecai, [and lead him on horseback] through the city square,
and proclaimed before him, "This [is what is done] to the man whom the king wants to honor!"
12 Then returned Mordecai to the palace gate, while Haman hastened to his house, mourning with a cover over his head.
13 Then told Haman Zeresh his wife and all his friends all that had happened to him.
[They responded to him]—his wise advisors and Zeresh his wife, "If he is from the seed [of this people—the Jews], [this Mordecai],
[this one of which] [you have begun] to fall [before him], you will not [overcome him], but you will surely fall before him."
14 But while they were speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived. Quickly they escorted Haman to the banquet prepared by Esther.

7:1 [So they came]—the king and Haman—to dine with Esther the queen.
2 [Then inquired] the king to Esther once again, [on the second] day at the feast over wine, "[What might be your wish] Esther my Queen?
It shall [be be granted to you]. [What is your request]? Even half the kingdom—[it shall be fulfilled]".
3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, "[If I have found] favor in your eyes, O king, [and it seems good] to the king,
grant me my life—this is my request—[and the life of my people], [that is my desire]*. *Special melody

7:4 For we have been sold, myself and my people, to be destroyed, slain, and annihilated*. *Lamentations melody
[If it were only that] as slaves [and servant girls] we had been sold, [I would have kept quiet].
[As things are,] the persecutor [certainly is not] [worth the damage] done to the king."
5 And answered King Ahashuerus, saying to Esther the queen, "Who is he, and where is he, who put it in his heart to do such a thing?"
6 Esther replied, "[The man]—our persecutor and enemy, is this wretch Haman here." And Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.
7 [Then the king] arose in his wrath from the feast of wine, [going to the palace] garden.
Haman remained to plead for his soul to Esther the queen, for he saw that resolved [against him] [to destroy him] was the king.
8 [When the king] [came back] from the palace garden to the hall | to the feast—[the banquet of wine], Haman [lay prostrate]
across the couch where Esther was lying. Exclaimed the king, "[Will he also do this]: [ravish her here], [will he assault the queen]
with me in the palace? [When the word] came out of the mouth of the king, the face of Haman—[they covered it up].
9 Then spoke Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, in [attendance on the king], "What is more], [see the stake],
[that has been made] by Haman [for Mordecai]**, who [spoke good] [on the king's behalf].
It is standing at the house of Haman, with a height of fifty cubits. Replied the king, "Hang him on it."
10 And they hanged Haman [on the stake] [which he had put up] for Mordecai,
and the wrath of the king was ended*. *special melody **Rare tropes: *galgal pazer gadol*

8:1 That [very day] he gave—King Ahasuerus—to Esther the queen [the estate of Haman],
enemy of the Jews. Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had revealed what he was to her.
2 The king removed [his signet ring] which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai.
[Then she appointed] [Esther put in charge]—Mordecai over the house of Haman.
3 Yet again Esther [went to speak] before the king and fell at his feet, weeping [and imploring him]
to avert the evil plot of Haman the Agagite and the scheme that he had devised against the Jews.
4 Then the king held out to Esther this: the scepter of gold. So Esther arose and stood before the king.

8:5 [She had this to say]: "If to the king it seems good, [and if I have found] favor [before him], and the thing seems right before the king,
and if I am pleasing in his eyes, [let it be written] to revoke the letters—[the letters that were written] by Haman son of Hamedatha the Agagite,
which [he had written] to destroy the Jews, who are found in all the provinces of the king.
6 [For indeed], how can I bear to witness the evil that will befall my people? And how endure to see the destruction of my kindred?*
7 Then said King Ashasuerus to Esther the Queen and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, the estate of Haman I have given to Esther, *Lamentations melody
and him—they have hanged on the gallows, [because of what he did]—he tried to lay his hand on the Jews.
8 [And you yourselves], you may write concerning the Jews what seems good in your eyes in the name of the king,
[and seal it] with the the king's signet,
[since an edict] which is written | [in the name of the king] [and which has been sealed] with the king's signet cannot be revoked."
9 [Then were summoned] [the scribes of the king] [in that very hour], in the third month, which is the month of Sivan,
on [the third and twentieth] day, [and there was written] [all that was ordered] by Mordecai: [writing to the Jews],
to the satraps, [to the governors], to the princes of the provinces [who preside] | from India to Ethiopia:
seven and twenty and a hundred provinces, each province [in its own script], each people in its own language,
and to the Jews [in their own script] and language.
10 [He had them written] in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the signet of the king,
and he sent proclamations [sending them by way] of couriers on horseback; riders on the swiftest steeds, bred from the royal stallion.
11 [In them it was written] that the king had granted to the Jews | [to be found] [in every city]
[the right to assemble] and protect their lives, to destroy, to kill and annihilate [all the forces]
[of any people] [or or any province] that might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their possessions—
12 on a single day in all the provinces of King Ahashuerus, on [the thirteenth day] of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.
13 A copy [of the royal edict] was issued as law in every province, and displayed to all the peoples,
so that the Jews would be ready on that day [to avenge themselves] on their enemies.
14 The couriers, mounted on the swiftest steeds, [went out urgently], hastened and pressed on by the king's command.
And the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the capital.* *Invitational cadence

8:15* And Mordecai went out from before the king dressed in royal robes of turquoise and white, *Special melodies
a magnificent crown of gold, a cloak of fine linen, [and purple wool]. The city of Shushan [sang for joy] and was glad.
16 [For the Jews] there was light, gladness, joy and honor.
17 In province after province, and [in city after city], [in every place] to which [the word of the king] and his decree had reached,
there was joy and gladness for the Jews, a feast and a holiday, [and a great many] of the people of the land [professed themselves Jews],
for there fell the fear of the Jews upon them.

9:1 [In the twelfth] month of the year, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day it happened,
when [the time had arrived] [for the command of the king] and his decree to be enforced, [this being the day] on which had expected the enemies
of the Jews to prevail [over them], it was turned around; namely: [they overcame]—[the Jews in fact prevailed] over [all their enemies].
2 Then gathered the Jews [in their cities] in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to send forth their hand [against those who sought] their harm.
No man could stand [before them], for their fell a fear of them [over all the peoples].
3 All officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, [those doing] the work of the king, supported the Jews;
since there fell the fear of Mordecai upon them.
4 For great was Mordecai in the house of the king, and his fame was spreading in all the provinces. This man Mordecai was gaining in power.
5 Then struck the Jews at all their enemies: the stroke of the sword brought slaughter and destruction.
They did—to those who hated them—as they willed.
6 & 7 In Shushan the capital the Jews did kill—they destroyed—all of five hundred men: 7 including Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha;
8 & 9 [including also] [one Poratha] and Adalia and Aridatha, 9 along with Parmashta and Asirai and Aridai and Vaizatha.
10 [These were the ten] sons of Haman, [son of Hammedatha], enemy of the Jews: [these they killed].
[But on the plunder] they did not lay a hand.
11 On [that very day] they brought the number [of those that were killed] in Shushan the capital before the king.
12 And spoke the king to Esther the queen, "In Shushan, [here in the citadel] the Jews have killed and destroyed [all of five] hundred men,
including the ten [sons of Haman]. [In the remainder of] the provinces of the king, what have they done?
[And what is your wish]? It shall be granted to you. What do you request further? [It shall be done]."

9:13 Responded Esther, "If to the king it seems good, let it be granted—[tomorrow may it be]—that the Jews who are in Shushan
[may act again] by the decree of today, [and may it be] that the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows."
14 So the king commanded that this be done. The decree was proclaimed in Shushan. [And so it was] that the ten sons of Haman were hanged.
15 [And they assembled]—the Jews, [those who were in Shushan], [once again they came forth] on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,
and they killed in Shushan three hundred men. [But on the plunder] they did not lay a hand.
16 The remainder—[all the rest of the Jews] [who lived] in the provinces of the king [also assembled] | and defended [their very lives].
They had a respite from their enemies, and killed of their foes five and seventy thousand, [but on the plunder] they did not lay a hand.
17 This was the thirteenth day of the month of Adar.
[They rested] on the fourteenth day of that month, making [of it] a day of feasting and gladness.
18 But the Jews [who were in Shushan] [got together] on the thirteenth day of the month and on the fourteenth day,
[and they rested] on the fifteenth day of the month, and made of it a day of feasting and gladness.
19 [That is why] the Jews, [dwelling in the villages] [those who live] in towns [without walls] celebrate [this special day]:
the fourteenth day of the month of Adar for feasting and gladness and a *Yom-Tov*, and for sending presents one to another.
20 So recorded Mordecai the events aforementioned, and he sent letters [to all of the Jews]
who lived in all of the provinces of King Ahasuerus, [those who were near] [and those who were far].
21 [to establish] [among themselves] that they [should observe] [these special times]: this, the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,
[and also observe] the fifteenth day of that month, from year to year
22 [these being the days] [which offered relief] [on them] for the Jews from their foes,
[and the month] [in which] [things were turned] for them from sorrow to joy, from mourning to a *Yom-Tov*;
and to make [of them] days of feasting and gladness, for sending gifts one to another, and presents [to the poor].
23 So undertook the Jews that which they had begun to practice, [and they heeded the words] that Mordecai had written to them.
24 [All because] Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of all the Jews, plotted against the Jews
to destroy them, and he cast the *pur*—that is, the lot—to consume them and destroy them.

9:25 [But when Esther came] before the king he commanded by letter, [that it recoil]—
[this wicked plot], [this evil aim], which he devised against the Jews—[on his own head],
[and that they should hang]—[he himself] and his sons—on the gallows.
26 [And this is the reason why] they call these days [by the name] *Purim*, from the word *pur*. [And therefore] [because of all the words]
of the letter we speak of, [and of what they had seen] in these matters, and what had happened to them,
27 they established and imposed—the Jews—on themselves and on their seed, [and on all] who might [join them],
[they should do] [this without fail]: that [they should observe] the two days just mentioned, [in the manner prescribed] [and in its proper time],
from year to year.
28 And [these very days] should be remembered and observed from generation to generation,
by every family, in every province, in every city, [and the days] of Purim [commemorated here]
[must not fail] to be observed among the Jews, [nor the memory of them] die out among their seed.
29 [Then she wrote a letter]—Esther the queen, [daughter of Abihail], along with Mordecai the Jew, [with full authority],
[in order to confirm] [the letter of Mordecai] [concerning *Chag Purim*]—she wrote this, the second one.
30 And he sent letters [to all the Jews] to the seven and twenty and one hundred provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus,
with words of *shalom* and *emet* (truth).
31 [in order to establish] the days of Purim here noted [at their appointed time] [just as it was] enjoined on them by Mordecai the Jew
and Esther the queen, [and that which they] had decreed for themselves and for their seed, also matters of fasting and lamentation.
32 The decree of Esther [served to confirm] this observance of Purim, this holiday, and it was recorded in a scroll*. *end-of-chapter melody

10:1 [Then did impose] King Ahashuerus [a tax as tribute] on the land and the islands of the sea.
2* [All the deeds] of his power and of his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai to which he was raised by the king—
they [are all written] [in a book]: the royal chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. *Special melodies
3* For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus [and a great man] among the Jews,
and esteemed by all his brethren, and sought the good of his people, speaking peace to all his kin.

16. Summary of the *Te'amim*

מֵרְכָא טִפְחָא מֵרְכָא סִילּוּק

mé-r^{e}- KHA tip-p^{e} -ḤA __ mé-r^{e}- KHA sí - LUK____

מֵרְכָא טִפְחָא סִילּוּק

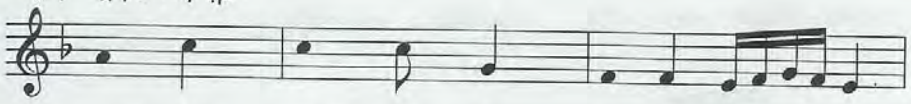
mé-r^{e}- KHA tip-p^{e} -ḤA __ sí - LUK__

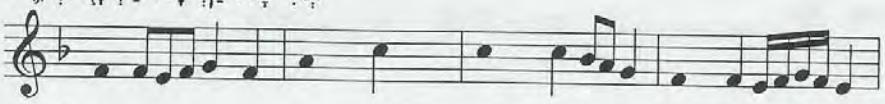
מֵרְכָא טִפְחָא מוּנַח אֶתְנַחְתָּא

mé -r^{e} - KHA tip-p^{e}-ḤA __ mu - NAḤ 'et - naḥ - TA____

מֵרְכָא טִפְחָא אֶתְנַחְתָּא

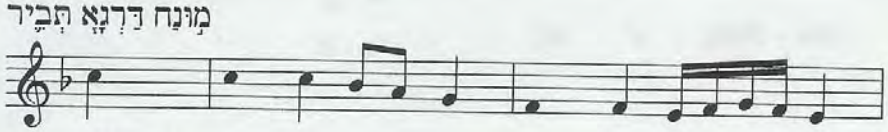
mé -r^{e} - KHA tip - p^{e} - ḤA ____ 'et - naḥ - TA_____

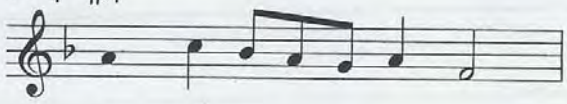
קַדְמָה מֵרְכָא תְּבִיר

kad - MA mé-r^{e}-KHA_____ t^{e}-VIR _____

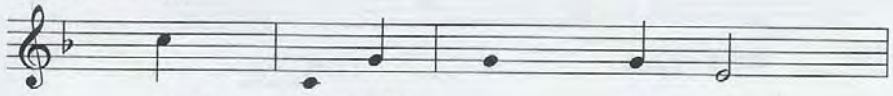
תְּלִישָׁא קַדְמָה דַּרְגָּא תְּבִיר

t^{e}-lí-SHA_____ kad-MA dar - GA ___ t^{e}- VIR _____

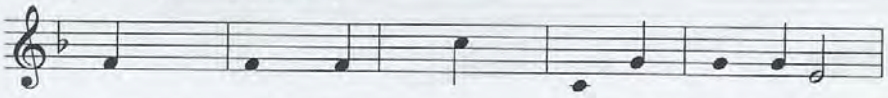
מֻנַח מֵרְכָא תְּבִיר

MU-naḥ mé- r^{e} - KHA __ t^{e} - VIR _____

מֻנַח דַּרְגָּא תְּבִיר

MU-naḥ dar- GA _____ t^{e} - VIR _____

זְקֵף־גָּדוֹל

za - KÉF _____

יְתִיב מוּנַח זָקֵף

TÍV mu- NAḤ za - KÉF __

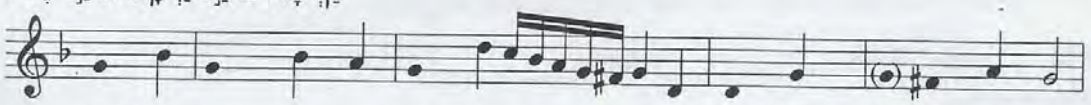
מְוּנַח מֵרְכָא פַּשְׁטָא מוּנַח זָקֵף

MU-naḥ mé-r^{e}-KHA TA mu- NAḤ za-KÉF __

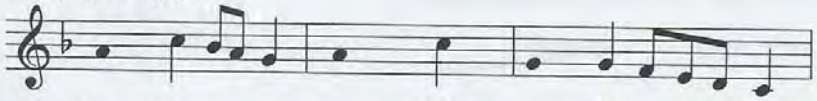
מְוּנַח מַהְפַּךְ פַּשְׁטָא מוּנַח זָקֵף

MU-naḥ mah-PAKH pash - TA mu- NAḤ za-KÉF __

תְּלִישָׁה קַדְמָה מַהְפַּךְ פַּשְׁטָא מוּנַח זָקֵף

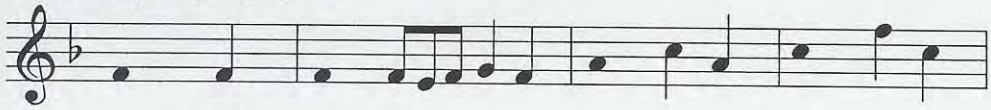
t^{e}-lí-SHA __ kad - MA mah - PAKH pash - TA mu-NAḤ za - KÉF__

קַדְמָה מוּנַח זַרְקָא מוּנַח סֶגוֹל

kad-MA mu-NAḤ __ zar - KA_____ mu - NAḤ se - GÓL __

דַּרְגָּא מוּנַח רְבִיעַ

dar - GA_____ mu - NAḤ r^{e} - VÍ - - - - a'

לְגַרְמֵהּ | מוּנַח רְבִיעַ

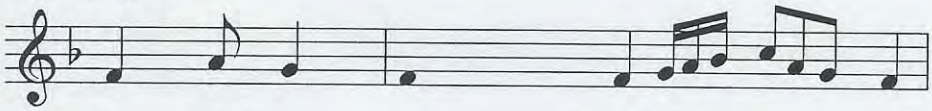
l^{e}-gar-MÉH _____ mu - NAḤ r^{e} - VÍ - - - a'

מוּנַח תְּלִישָׁהּ קַדְמָה וְגֵרֵשׁ

mu - **NAḤ** t^{e} -lí-**SHA** _____ kad- **MA** __ (v^{e}) -**GE**-resh

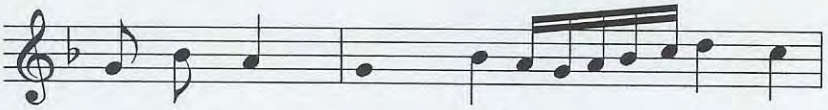
מֻנַּח גֵּרְשַׁיִם

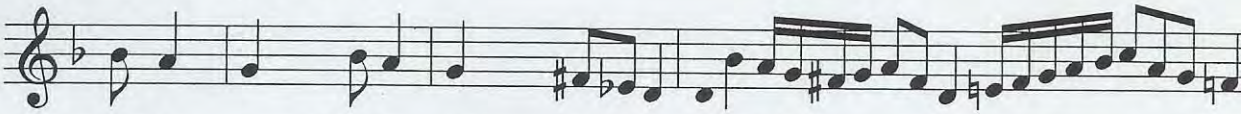
MU-naḥ gé-r^{e}-sha-**YIM** _____

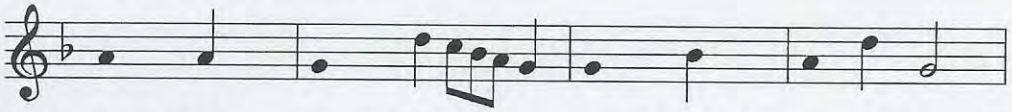
מוּנַח תְּלִישָׁה



mu - **NAḤ** __ t^{e} - lí - **SHA** _____

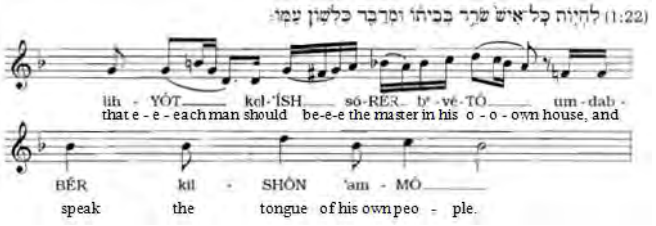
מוּנַח פָּזֵר

mu - **NAḤ** __ pa - **ZÉR** _____

מוּנַח מוּנַח גַּלְגַּל פָּזֵר־גָּדוֹל

(mu-) **NAḤ**__ mu - **NAḤ**__ gal - **GAL** __ pa-**ZÉR** _____

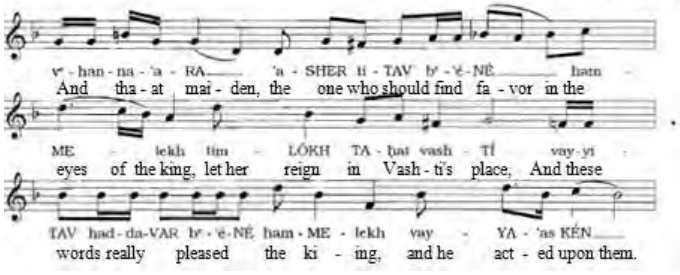
מֵרְכָא טִפְחָא מֵרְכָא סִילּוּק (final)

mé-r^{e}- **KHA** tip-p^{e}-**HA** mé-r^{e}- **KHA** sí- **LUK**

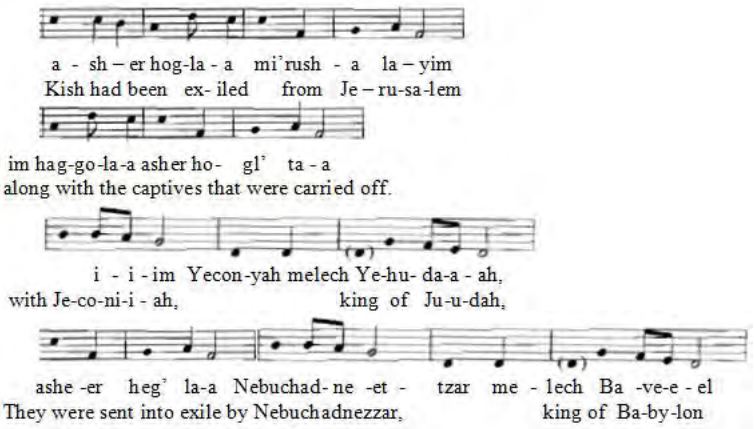
Special melodies for Megillat Esther
as presented by Jushua Jacobson in 'Chanting the Hebrew Bible' (1st edition)

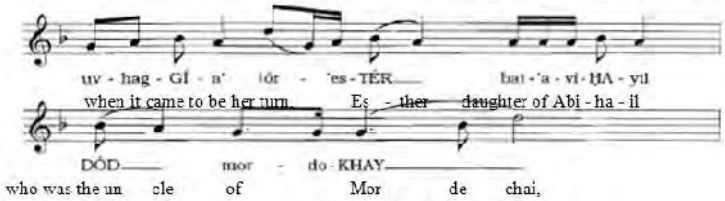
1:7 Lamentations melody (for the cups plundered from the temple)

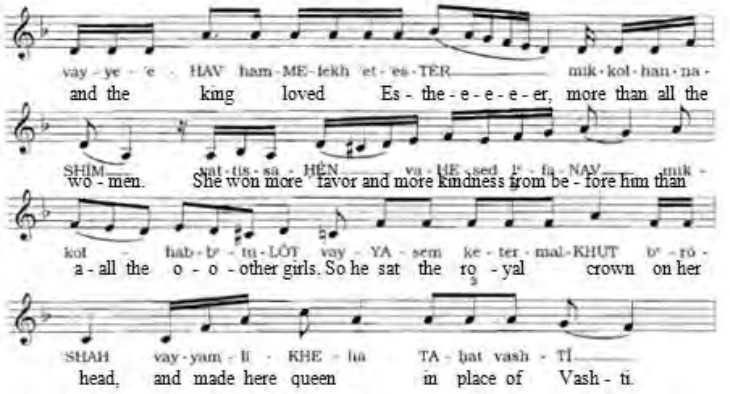
(1:22) לִהְיוֹת כָּל־אִישׁ שֹׂרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְרַבֵּר כִּלְשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ׃

lih - YÓT kol-'ÍSH sō-RER b'-vé-TŌ um-dab-
that e - e - each man should be-e-e the master in his o - o - own house, and
BÉR kil - SHŌN 'am - MŌ
speak the tongue of his own peo - ple.

(2:4) וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּיטַב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי

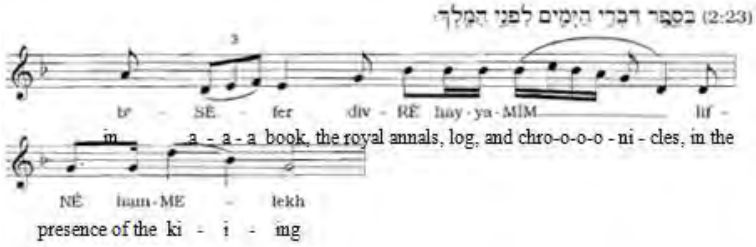
וַיִּיטַב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן׃

v' - han - na - 'a - RA 'a - SHER ti - TAV b' - 'é - NÉ ham -
And tha - at mai - den, the one who should find fa - vor in the
ME - lekh tim - LÓKH TA - ḥat vash - TÍ vay-yi -
eyes of the king, let her reign in Vash - ti's place, And these
ṬAV had - da-VAR b' - 'é - NÉ ham - ME - lekh vay - YA - 'as KÉN
words really pleased the ki - ing, and he act - ed upon them.

2.6 Lamentations melody

a - sh – er hog-la - a mi'rush - a la – yim
Kish had been ex- iled from Je – ru-sa-lem
im hag-go-la-a asher ho- gl' ta - a
along with the captives that were carried off.
i - i - im Yecon-yah melech Ye-hu- da-a - ah,
with Je-co-ni-i - ah, king of Ju-u-dah,
ashe -er heg' la-a Nebuchad- ne -et - tzar me - lech Ba -ve-e - el
They were sent into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Ba-by-lon

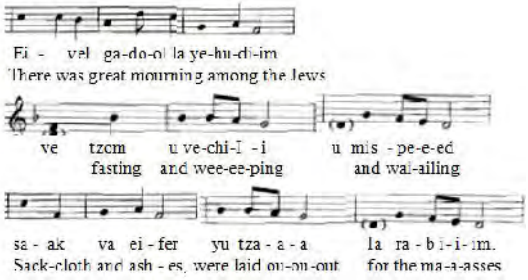
(2:15) וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר־אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־אֲבִיחַיִל דֹּד מָרְדֳּכָי

uv - hag - GÍ - a' lór - 'es - TÉR ḥat - 'a - ví - ḤA - yil
when it came to be her turn, Es - ther daughter of Abi - ha - il
DÓD mor - do - KHAY
who was the un cle of Mor de chai,

(2:17) וַיֶּאֱהַב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־כָּל־הַבְּתוּלֹת וַיָּשֶׂם כֶּתֶר־מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ וַיַּמְלִיכֶהָ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי׃

vay - ye - 'e HAV ham - ME - lekh 'et - 'es - TÉR mik - kol - han - na -
and the king loved Es - the - e - e - e - er, more than all the
SHIM - wo - men. nat - tis - sa - ḤÉN va - ḤE - sed b' - fa - NAV mik -
She won more favor and more kindness from be - fore him than
kol - hab - b' - tu - LÓT vay - YA - sem ke - ter - mal - KHUT b' - rō -
a - all the o - o - other girls. So he sat the ro - yal crown on her
SHAH vay - yam - li - KHE - ha TA - ḥat vash - TÍ
head, and made here queen in place of Vash - ti.

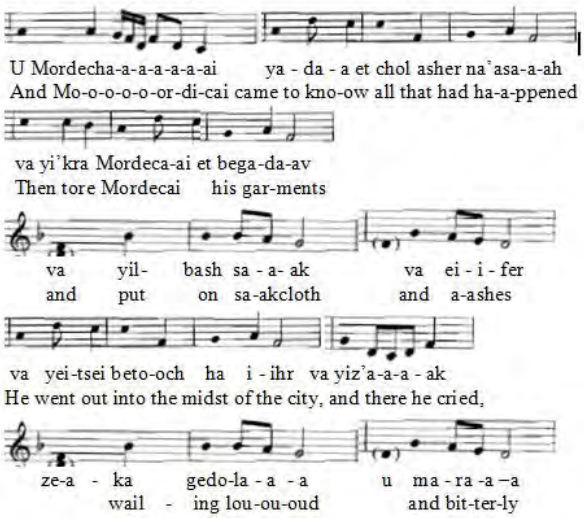
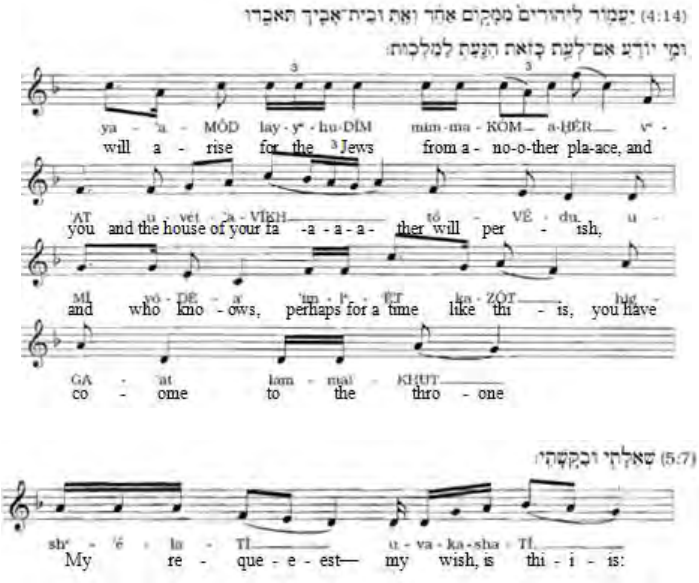
(2:23) בְּסֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ׃

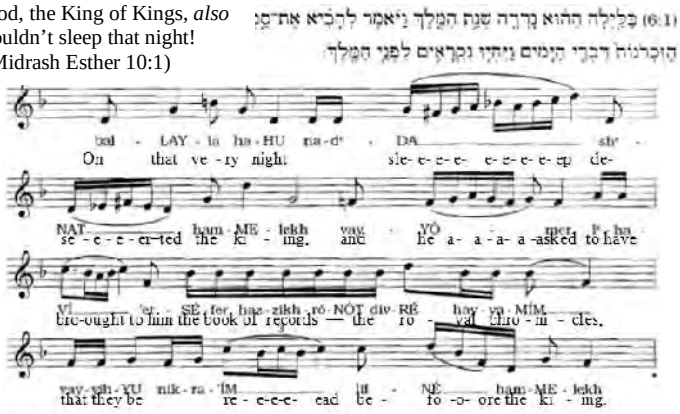
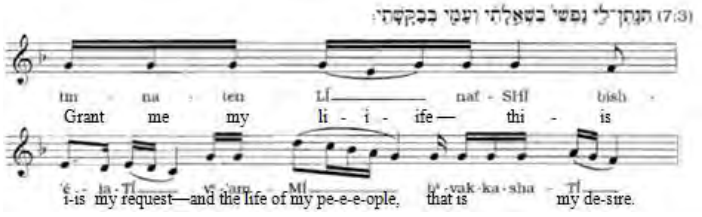

3
b' - SE - fer div - RÉ hay - ya - MIM lif -
in a - a - a book, the royal annals, log, and chro-o-o-o - ni - cles, in the
NÉ ham - ME - lekh
presence of the ki - i - ing

3.15 Lamentations melody

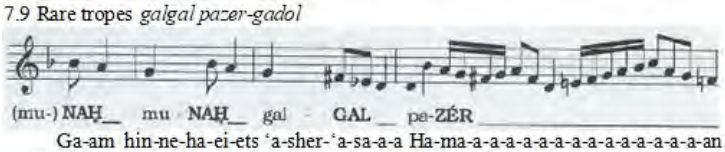
4.3 Lamentations melody

Ei - vel ga-do-ol la ye-hu-di-im
There was great mourning among the Jews
ve tzom u ve-chi-I - i u mis - pe-e-ed
fasting and wee-ee-ping and wai-ailing
sa - ak va ei - fer yu tza - a - a la ra - b i - i - im.
Sack-cloth and ash - es, were laid ou-ou-out for the ma-a-asses

4.1 Lamentations melody

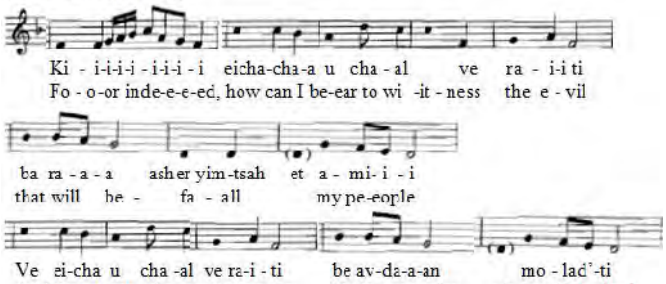

U Mordecha-a-a-a-a-a-ai ya - da - a et chol asher na'asa-a-ah
And Mo-o-o-o-o-or-di-cai came to kno-ow all that had ha-a-ppened
va yi'kra Mordeca-ai et bega-da-av
Then tore Mordecai his gar-ments
va yil- bash sa - a - ak va ei - i - fer
and put on sa-akcloth and a-ashes
va yei-tsei beto-och ha i - ihr va yiz'a-a-a - ak
He went out into the midst of the city, and there he cried,
ze-a - ka gedo-la - a - a u ma - ra - a – a
wail - ing lou-ou-oud and bit-ter-ly

(4:14) יַעֲמֹד לַיְּהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאַתְּ וּבֵית אָבִיךְ תֹּאבֵדוּ
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לְעֵת כָּזֹאת הִגַּעַתְּ לַמַּלְכוּת׃
ya - 'a - MÓD lay - y' - hu - DÍM mim - ma - KÓM— a - HÉR— v' -
will a - rise for the Jews from a - no-o-ther pla-ace, and
AT u - vet - 'a - VÍEH— tó - VÉ - du u -
you and the house of your fa -a - a - a - ther will per - ish,
MI yó - DÉ - a' 'im - l' - ÉT ka - ZÓT— hig -
and who kno - ows, perhaps for a time like thi - is, you have
GA - 'at lam - mal - KHUT—
co - ome to the thro - one
(5:7) שְׁאֵלָתִי וּבַקָּשָׁתִי׃
sh' - é - la - TÍ— u - va - ka - sha - TÍ—
My re - que - e - est— my wish, is thi - i - is:

God, the King of Kings, *also* couldn't sleep that night! (Midrash Esther 10:1)

(6:1) בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נָדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵ
הַזִּכְרֹנוֹת דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים וַיִּהְיוּ נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ׃
bal - LAY - la ha - HU na - d' - DA— sh' -
On that ve - ry night sle - e - e - e - e - e - e - e - ep de -
NAT - se - e - e - ed ham - ME - lekh vay - YÓ - mer l' - ha
the ki - ng, and he a - a - a - a - asked to have
VI - 'ey - SE for haz - zikh - ró - NOT div - RÉ hay - ya - MÍM—
bro-ought to him the book of records — the ro - yal chro - ni - cles,
vay - yih - YU nik - ra - ÍM— lif - NÉ ham - ME - lekh
that they be re - e - e - e - ead be - fo - o - ore the ki - ng.

(7:3) תִּנָּתֶן־לִי נַפְשִׁי בְּשֵׁאֲלָתִי וְעַמִּי בְּבַקָּשָׁתִי׃
tin - na - ten LÍ— naf - SHÍ bish -
Grant me my li - i - ife— thi - is
'é - la - TÍ— vi - 'am - MÍ— hi' - vak - ka - sha - TÍ—
i-is my request—and the life of my pe-e-e-ople, that is my de-sire.

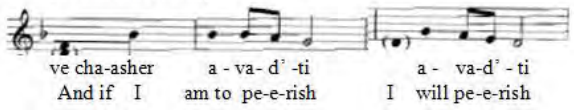
7.9 Rare tropes *galgal pazer-gadol*

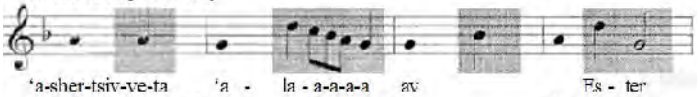


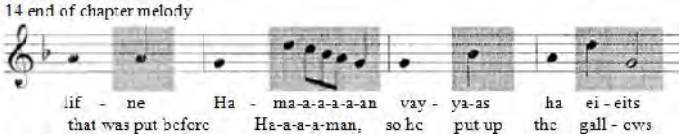
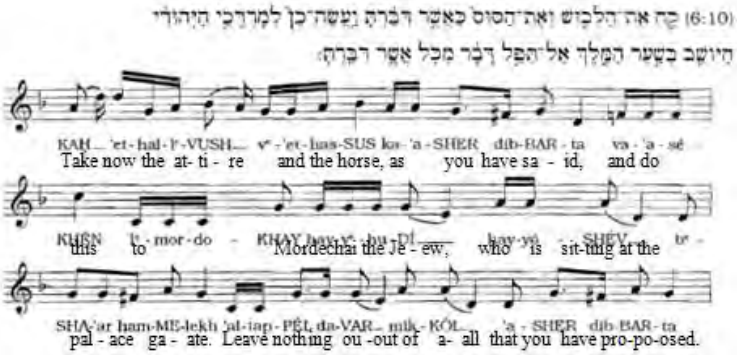
Ga-am hin-ne-ha-ei-ets 'a-sher-'a-sa-a-a Ha-ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-an
What is more see the sta-ake that has been made by Ha-ma-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-an

8.6 Lamentations melody

Ki - i-i-i-i - i-i-i - i eicha-cha-a u cha - al ve ra - i-i ti
Fo - o-or inde-e-e-ed, how can I be-ear to wi -it - ness the e - vil
ba ra - a - a asher yim-tsah et a - mi - i - i
that will be - fa - all my pe-eople
Ve ei-cha u cha -al ve ra-i - ti be av-da-a-an mo - lad'-ti
And ho-ow en - du - re to se- ee the de-struc-tion of my ki-in-dred

4.16 Lamentations melody

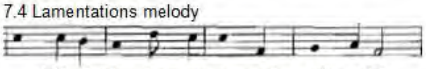


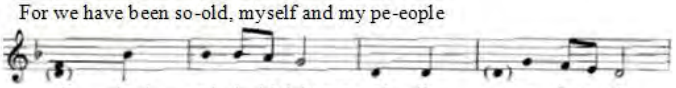
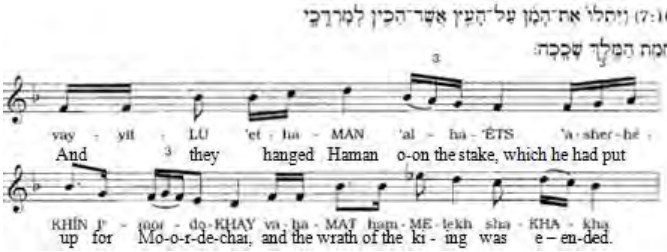
4.17 end of chapter melody

5.14 end of chapter melody



(6:10) קַח אֶת־הַלְּבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ וְעֲשֵׂה־כֵן לְמָרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַל־תַּפֵּל דָּבָר מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ׃
KAḤ— 'et - hal - l' - VUSH— v' - 'et - has - SUS ka - 'a - SHER dib - BAR - ta va - 'a - sé
Take now the at- ti - re and the horse, as you have sa - id, and do
KHÉN l' - mor - do - KHAY hay - yo - shev b' -
this to Mordechai the Je - ew, who is sit-ting at the
SHA'ar ham-MÉ-lekh 'al-tap - PÉL da-VAR— mik - KÓL— 'a - SHER dib - BAR - ta
pal - ace ga - ate. Leave nothing ou -out of a- all that you have pro-po-osed.

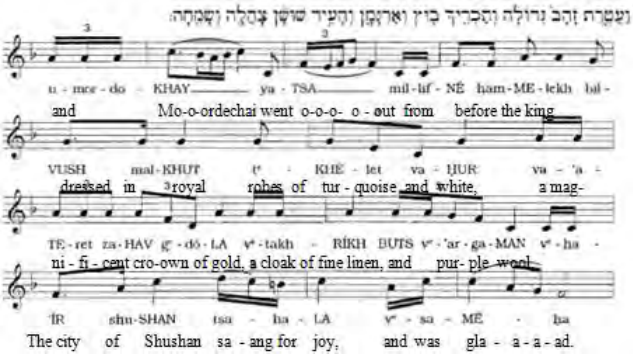
7.4 Lamentations melody

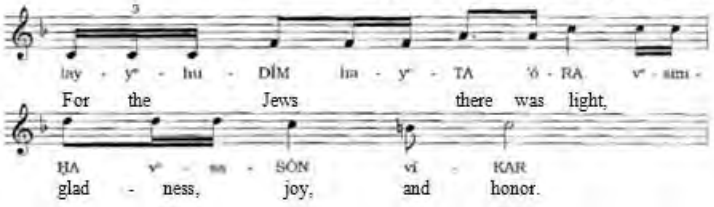


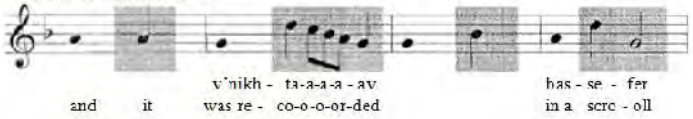


(7:10) וַיִּתְלוּ אֶת־הָמָן עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לְמָרְדֳּכָי
וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכָכָה׃
vay - yit - LU 'et - ha - MAN 'al - ha - ÉTS 'a - sher - hé -
And they hanged Haman o-on the stake, which he had put
KHÍN l' - mor - do - KHAY va - ha - MAT ham - ME - lekh sha - KHA - kha
up for Mo-o-r-de-chai, and the wrath of the ki - ing was e – en-ded.

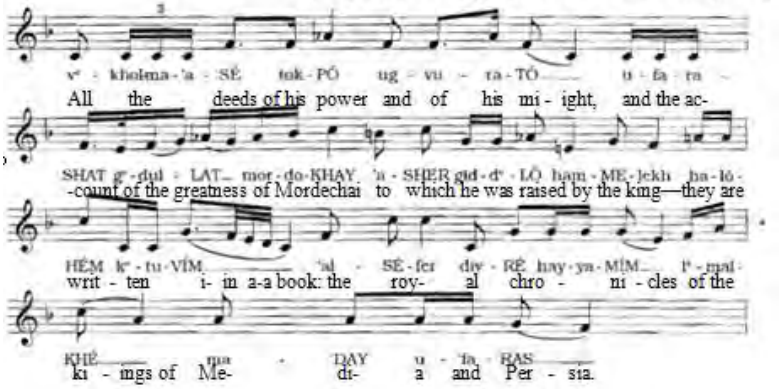
(8:15) וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָצָא | מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר

וּעֲטֶרֶת זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה וְתַכְרִיךְ בּוּץ (אַרְגָּמָן) וְתוֹלַעַת שׁוּשָׁן צָהֳלָה וְשִׂמְחָה

(8:16) לַיְּהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וִיקָר׃

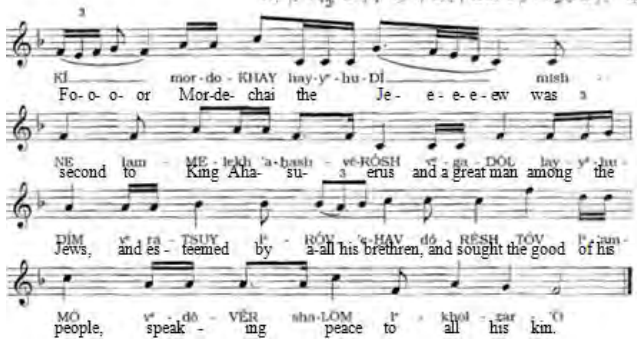


9.32 end of chapter melody

(10:2) וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה תָקְפּוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ וּפָרְשַׁת גְּדֻלַּת מָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר גִּדְּלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ

הֲלוֹא־הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מָדַי וּפָרָס׃



(10:3) כִּי | מָרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי מִשְׁנֶה לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים

וְרָצוּי לְרֹב אֶחָיו דֹּרֵשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדֹבֵר שָׁלוֹם לְכָל־זַרְעוֹ׃

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some "poetic licence", and some willingness on the part of the listener to be "carried" by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these "transtropilations" are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a "window" into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. "cut a covenant") to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 "beam above the door" rather than "lintel") to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between "literalness" and "listenable-ness". A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana "lean toward" the words they "conjoin" to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola "lean away" from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

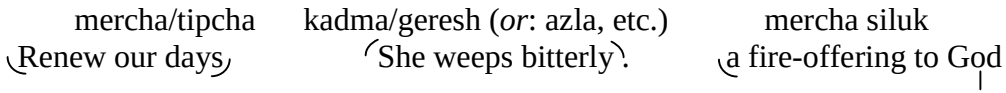
The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* "rivi'i" melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the "grey bracket" device, I indicate pairs of tropes by "wrapping them around" the phrase which have the combined melody:



Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don't strictly match the Hebrew. I also "pad" some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the leyner's cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g'dola* (֠), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the muscial phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

"*Metigah-zakef*"is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in "Navigating the Bible II") this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in "take care" in this example). Haschel's system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don't write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the leyner can choose to pronounce it as "*God*" or "*Adonai*".

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, 'The Living Torah' (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, 'The Bible With Sources Revealed' (2003)
Everett Fox, 'The Five Books of Moses' (1997)
The Stone Edition 'Tanach' (1996)
JPS 'Hebrew-English Tanach', (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, 'Notes on the New Translation of the Torah' (1969)
Robert Alter, 'The Five Books of Moses' (2004)
Commentaries in the 'Anchor Bible' series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)

12. Detours in the Chanting of the Book of Esther

To add expression, drama and sometimes humor to certain phrases and sentences in this Megillah, special musical detours or variations have become traditional in many communities.

According to tradition those phrases which depict the gloom and despair of the Jews, are to be chanted with motifs from the cantillation of the Book of "Lamentations." (See Chart 6.) For examples of this tradition see detours Nos. 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 15.

These borrowings are primarily used, as has been stated, to give added expression to certain key-phrases and sentences and to make them accord with the midrashic interpretations of these texts. Midrash Esther 2:11, for example, points out that the vessels used at Ahasuerus' feast were those taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E. Therefore the melodic change from the joyous Megillah mode to sadness of the mode of Lamentations.

At the beginning of Chapter 6:1 we are told of the sleeplessness which King Ahasuerus suffered on a certain night. According to Midrash Esther 10:1, God, the King of Kings, also suffered sleeplessness due to the terrible plight of his people in Persia. Therefore, the Ashkenazim chant this opening phrase with the elaborate melody used for "Hamelech" ("The King") at the opening of the second section of the morning service on Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur.

According to the musical tradition in some communities, "Vayitlu" (see detour 16) is chanted in a joyous and exultant style.

from:

Biblical Chant

A. W. Binder

Professor of Liturgical Music
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Hebrew Union School of Sacred Music

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